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ABSTRACT

To determine whether the suggested poetry teaching procedures found in the teacher manuals of sixth-grade basal readers reflect the pedagogical procedures suggested by expert opinion and research, an indepth analysis was made of a total of 106 poetry lessons in eight teacher manuals. The poetry lessons were analyzed for the purposes of determining the general organization of the student text and the manual, noting any statements of objectives for poetry instruction, and identifying the number of poetry lessons contained in the manual. The complete analysis of each manual consisted of an overview of the poetry lessons, including a listing of stated objectives; the assessment instrument ratings and descriptions of the suggested teaching procedures; a summary table of assessment instrument ratings; and a concluding summary. Findings indicated that the stated objectives stressed a one-dimensional, mechanistic view of poetry instruction. They focused on cognitive rather than affective response to poetry, with an emphasis on the comprehension of form rather than the apprehension of content. The suggested teaching procedures made very limited provision for presenting poetry in a meaningful context and did not suggest any readiness experiences to stimulate interest or prepare students for reading or listening to poetry. For the most part, the poetry instruction in the sixth-grade basal manuals consisted of a superficial examination of poetic text, language, and form rather than an exploration of feelings, thoughts, and ideas. (HOD)

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POETRY INSTRUCTION: DO BASALS FOLLOW RECOMMENDED PROCEDURES?

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Poetry Instruction: Do Basals Follow Recommended Procedures?

Basal readers represent one source where teachers can find poetry to share with children. For some teachers, the basal reader is the sole source used in the teaching of poetry (Terry, 1974; Tom, 1973). The teacher manuals[1] accompanying basal readers offer detailed guidance in the teaching of poems presented in the student texts. The methodology of teachers who rely on these manuals may be strongly influenced by the suggested teaching procedures. Because of the potential impact of basals on poetry instruction, it becomes important to examine the suggested pedagogical procedures in basal reader manuals to determine whether they reflect what is known about teaching poetry from research and expert opinion.

Past research into the pedagogical procedures employed in basal reader series has been mainly concerned with the analysis of narrative material. A literature search identified three studies that included some analysis of the suggested poetry teaching procedures in basal manuals. Rudie (1975) examined the quality of the poetry and poetry teaching guidelines in the second grade manuals of 11 basal reading series. She found that, in general, the teaching suggestions were based on sound philosophy and methodology and were concerned with children's direct involvement and genuine reactions.

Charlesworth (1977) examined poetry teaching procedures in teacher manuals of several Canadian basal reading series. She found that too little direction was provided for teaching the poems, or at the other extreme, the lessons were so highly directed that reader response was

[1]The term manual is used synonymously with teacher guide and teacher edition.

inhibited by the structure of the lessons.

Because the procedures developed for these studies were not described, it is impossible to know how many poetry lessons were examined or how they were analyzed. The validity of their conclusions is, therefore, open to question.

Durkin (1981) examined poetry lessons in her study of comprehension instruction in five basal reading series. She found that "comprehension instruction was lacking or almost lacking in two of the five series" (p. 541).

The purpose of this study was to examine the teaching suggestions that accompany poetry selections in sixth-grade basal readers to determine how closely they reflect the opinions and recommendations of experts in the area of children's literature, the views of poets and literary critics, and the findings and implications of research in the teaching and learning of poetry.

The basic question addressed by the study was: Do the suggested poetry teaching procedures found in the teacher manuals of sixth-grade basal readers reflect the pedagogical procedures suggested by expert opinion and research?

In order to answer the basic question, answers were sought first to the following specific questions:

1. What pedagogical procedures for effective poetry instruction at the elementary level are suggested by experts in the field of children's literature, by poets and literary critics, and by researchers in the area of teaching and learning poetry?

2. What information does an analysis of teacher manuals of widely used sixth-grade basal readers reveal regarding (a) the objectives of poetry instruction at the sixth-grade level, and (b) the suggested procedures for teaching specific poems?

Need For The Study

This study needed to be carried out for several reasons. A synthesis of information concerning elementary poetry instruction has not been done before; knowledge about the consensus that exists among authorities is useful in and of itself. The criteria for effective poetry instruction that emerged from this study provide a framework for further investigation into the methods and materials of poetry instruction.

An in-depth analysis of the suggested pedagogical procedures for teaching poetry at the sixth-grade level can be used by inservice teachers and textbook adoption committees who are interested in comparing the strengths and weaknesses of poetry instruction in various basal reading series.

The study makes available a valid and reliable instrument that can be used by preservice and inservice teachers to describe poetry teaching practices in basal manuals at all levels. The assessment instrument can also be used as a teaching device to increase education students' awareness of the criteria of effective poetry instruction.

The study makes recommendations for improving the treatment of poetry in basal series. Since basal readers constitute a major source of poetry instruction at the elementary level, it is crucial that the manuals suggest procedures that are consistent with the recommendations of experts and researchers in the area of teaching and learning poetry.

Delimitations

For purposes of the study, it was decided to examine all of the poetry lessons presented at one grade level of the eight most widely used basal reading series rather than to sample lessons from several grade

levels. Examination of manuals at one grade level allowed the researcher to carry out an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of the treatment of poetry in basal manuals which would not have been apparent in a sampling procedure.

The sixth-grade level was chosen for examination and evaluation for two reasons. First, the suggested poetry teaching procedures found in teacher manuals at the sixth-grade level most probably represent a continuation of the teaching procedures suggested in previous grades. Second, sixth grade represents a culmination of children's experience with poetry at the elementary level. Thus, it was felt that sixth-grade manuals would incorporate those skills that had preceded as well as continue the strand of poetry instruction in the series.

Review of Related Literature

Since the research in teaching and learning poetry is severely limited, our knowledge of pedagogical procedures from research must be supplemented by opinions and recommendations of experts in the field. Therefore, the primary source of information presented in this review of the literature has been the writings of experts in the area of children's literature, poets, and literary critics. In addition, where available, the recommendations of researchers in the area of teaching and learning poetry have also been included.

In a preliminary examination of the writings of May Hill Arbuthnot, Charlotte Huck, Robert Whitehead, and Helen Painter, it became apparent that these recognized authorities in the field of children's literature shared similar ideas regarding poetry instruction in the elementary classroom. Further investigation into the ideas of other writers in the field strengthened this observation and revealed a recurring pattern of statements relative to poetry instruction. After reviewing and

synthesizing the views and recommendations of the various writers and researchers consulted, it was possible to develop a set of five criteria, common to all, that are deemed necessary to guide children toward the ultimate goal of enjoying and appreciating poetry. These criteria served as a framework for the description of appropriate pedagogical procedures to achieve the goals inherent in each criterion. The criterion statements and the recommended procedures for effective poetry instruction are as follows:

1. Poetry Should Be Presented In A Meaningful Context.

Authorities in the field of teaching and learning poetry in the elementary school agree that the presentation of a poem should be preceded by readiness experiences that stimulate children's interest and promote involvement in the poem. Readiness experiences designed to create a meaningful context need not, in fact should not, be elaborate or lengthy. They may consist of a brief discussion relating the experiences of the children to the content of the poem, the provision of a question or questions to guide children's listening, the introduction of key words or phrases (without creating a vocabulary drill), or a discussion relating the poem to other poems, stories, or events (Arbuthnot & Sutherland, 1972; Arnstein, 1962; Bamman et al., 1971; Boyd, 1973; Dilworth, 1977; Sloan, 1975).

2. Poetry Should Be Orally Interpreted by The Teacher.

Poetry is a form of literature that expresses experience, feeling, and thought through the use of concentrated and condensed language. It depends on the carefully controlled combination of words and sounds to convey meaning. Because of its unique qualities, poetry is more difficult to read than prose.

Children who are asked to read poetry silently are likely to get caught up in the difficulty of decoding words and consequently miss

the meaning of the poem; the demands of the text may preclude experiencing the poem itself. For this reason, experts in the area of literature teaching recommend that poetry be read aloud to children. Since the success of a poem may depend on the teacher's oral interpretation, teachers are encouraged to prepare for class presentations by reading the selected poem aloud a number of times until they are able to combine the elements of "sound and sense" and experience the full meaning of the poem themselves before attempting to present it to others. Listening to poetry frees children from the difficult task of reading it and allows their auditory imagination to respond to the music and words that combine to create poetry. Repeated oral readings of a poem allow children the opportunity to build meaning and experience a poem to a greater degree than does one reading. Because of the difficulties inherent in reading poetry orally at sight, children should be asked to read poetry to others only when this oral reading is preceded by guided preparation. When children read poetry to themselves, it is recommended that they be encouraged to subvocalize so they can hear and feel the effects of the sounds of the words (Arbuthnot & Root, 1968; Funkhouser & O'Connell, 1978; Huck, 1979; Lowell, 1930; Merriam, 1971; Painter, 1970; Perrine, 1963; Witucke, 1970).

3. Poetry Instruction Should Encourage Active Participation

If the aim is to develop children's understanding and enjoyment of poetry, it must be presented in ways that encourage personal involvement and active classroom participation. Authorities agree that children are more apt to participate in poetry lessons when they do not feel vulnerable or compelled to verbalize what they perceive as expected responses. The willingness of children to share their feelings and express personal responses is determined to a great extent by the creation of an

atmosphere of acceptance in the classroom. The successful teacher views his or her role as facilitator in sharing the poetic experience rather than leader of instruction. Supplementing whole-class discussions with small group, teacher-guided discussion affords the greatest opportunity for student interaction and dialogue. Whereas whole class, teacher-led discussion limits the opportunities of students to interact verbally with the teacher and other students, small group discussion allows increased opportunities for dialogue in which children can relate their own responses to the responses of other children (Beach, 1972; Bleich, 1969; Cullinan, 1981; Dilworth, 1977; Haught, 1970; Howe, 1973; Sloan, 1975).

4. Poetry Instruction Should Be An Exploration of Feelings, Thoughts, And Ideas.

The authorities reviewed agree that the teaching and learning of poetry should be approached as an aesthetic experience. Classroom instruction should stress contemplation of the poem created when a reader becomes actively involved with a text or the printed signs on the page. Analysis of the text should not be a substitute for consideration of the poem. Discussions of poetry should be viewed as a means of knowing rather than reporting, allowing for the formulation, expression, and revision of natural responses. The major purpose of discussion should be to provoke thought rather than to check comprehension or to teach poetic techniques. The use of open-ended questioning strategies is recommended to encourage divergent thinking as children begin to formulate their own questions about poetry. Poetic understanding can be extended by encouraging children to relate the content of a poem to their own life experiences; digression from the poem to personal experiences is a natural response pattern that provides a basis from

which to extend understanding (Andrews, 1974; Beach, 1972; Britton, 1966; Fillion, 1981; Howe & Danish, 1971; Phillips, 1971; Probst, 1981; Rosenblatt, 1978; Stibbs, 1981).

The over-analysis of poetic verse interferes with children's experiencing poetry. The technical aspects of poetry should be taught, not for their own sake, but as they help convey meaning in a poem. It is recommended that the mechanics of poetry be taught inductively, leading children toward generalizations about poetry that come as the result of exposure to many examples. Consideration of the technical aspects of a poem should occur only after students have had a meaningful experience with the content of the poem (Devine, 1979; Sloan, 1975; Whitehead, 1968).

5. Poetry Appreciation Should Be Extended By Providing Opportunities To Share The Poetic Experience In Interesting And Meaningful Ways.

Student involvement in the poetic mode of expression can be facilitated by the judicious use of follow-up activities such as choral speaking, poetry writing, art activities, dramatics, and music. Successful choral speaking requires that children understand the poem and like the poem well enough to avoid the mechanical mouthing of words. Writing poetry can serve as an extension of reading poetry by helping children express inner feelings, encourage self-awareness, and develop unique expressive abilities. Assigned writing with predetermined subject matter or verse form should be avoided as children are likely to view it as an academic task rather than a creative endeavor. When choral speaking, poetry writing, and activities relating poetry to other art forms are used appropriately, they can enrich poetic experiences by showing children that poetry, art, dramatics, and music are all related (Arbuthnot & Root, 1968; Davis, 1977; Koch, 1970; Swanger, 1974; Whitehead, 1968, Witucke, 1970).

Method

The Assessment Instrument

The review of related literature served as the basis for the development of an assessment instrument. The instrument was a response to a recognized need for some device to (1) describe the suggested poetry teaching procedures found in basal manuals and (2) compare those procedures with recommendations from leading authorities in children's literature and other related fields.

The pedagogical procedures recommended by the experts consulted were structured into statements that constitute a checklist of items, each item being a characteristic of one of the criteria for effective poetry instruction.

Using a three dimensional rating system, characteristics of poetry lessons in basal manuals were described as being (1) present and enhancing the lesson by helping to bring poetry and children together in a meaningful way (P+), (2) present, but detracting from the lesson by interfering with the aesthetic reading of poetry (P-), or (3) absent from the lesson (A).

In addition to the checklist and one fill-in-the-blank item on the instrument, space was provided for comments concerning aspects of the lesson being examined that were not covered by the ratings and demanded further description. Figure 1 shows the complete assessment instrument.

Content validity was built into the instrument by the manner in which it was developed. It is comprised of items that reflect the poetry teaching procedures recommended by expert opinion and research.

The usability of the assessment instrument was determined by interrater agreement. A percentage of agreement between two judges and the researcher applying the instrument to two poetry lessons from each of three different basal series was computed and found to be 90%.

Figure 1

ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT FOR POETRY LESSONS IN BASAL MANUALS

Series _____ Book Title _____

Poem _____ Page in T.M. _____

	P+	P-	A
1. POETRY SHOULD BE PRESENTED IN A MEANINGFUL CONTEXT.			
a. The poem is introduced by discussion of children's experiences related to the content of the poem, by setting a mood or building expectations.....	___	___	___
b. Key words or phrases are introduced.....	___	___	___
c. The poem is related to another poem, story or event.....	___	___	___
d. Questions are provided to guide children's listening.....	___	___	___
Comments:			
2. POETRY SHOULD BE ORALLY INTERPRETED BY THE TEACHER.	P+	P-	A
a. The teacher is instructed to read the poem orally while the children listen.....	___	___	___
b. Guidelines for oral interpretation are supplied to the teacher.....	___	___	___
c. Repeated oral readings (teacher or recording) are indicated.....	___	___	___
d. After the first oral reading by the teacher, the children are directed to read along silently as the teacher reads orally or to subvocalize when reading the poem to themselves.....	___	___	___
Comments:			
3. POETRY INSTRUCTION SHOULD ENCOURAGE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION.	P+	P-	A
a. It is suggested that the class be divided into small groups for discussion.....	___	___	___
b. Suggested teaching procedures indicate the role of the teacher as facilitator rather than leader.....	___	___	___
Comments:			
4. POETRY INSTRUCTION SHOULD BE AN EXPLORATION OF FEELINGS, THOUGHTS, AND IDEAS.	P+	P-	A
a. Students are encouraged to ask their own questions.....	___	___	___
b. Discussion helps relate the poem to the personal experiences of the children.....	___	___	___
c. Discussion promotes affective response.....	___	___	___
d. Discussion includes open-ended questions that encourage divergent thinking.....	___	___	___
e. The emphasis of discussion is on content.....	___	___	___
f. Poetic techniques are discussed.....	___	___	___
Comments:			
5. POETRY APPRECIATION SHOULD BE EXTENDED BY PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE THE POETIC EXPERIENCE IN INTERESTING AND MEANINGFUL WAYS.			
a. What type of follow-up activity is suggested? (Choral speaking, poetry writing, art activities, dramatics, music, language activity, other...) Fill in the blank(s). If no activity is suggested, write None.	_____		
	_____		
b. Guidelines are provided for the teacher to help structure the follow-up activities as aesthetic experiences.....	P+ ___	P- ___	A ___
Comments:			

Materials

The basal reading series chosen for examination in the study were those cited in the El-Hi Market, 1980-1985 (1979) as the eight best selling reading series in the country. Sixth-grade teacher manuals were examined from the following companies: Economy Company (Keys to Reading, 1980); Ginn and Company (Ginn 720: Rainbow Edition, 1980); Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich (Bookmark Reading Program, 1979); Harper and Row (Reading Basics Plus, 1980); Holt, Rinehart and Winston (Holt Basic Reading Program, 1980); Houghton Mifflin Company (Houghton Mifflin Reading Program, 1981); Macmillan Publishing Company (Macmillan Reading Series r, 1980); and Scott, Foresman and Company (Scott, Foresman Reading, 1980).

A total of 106 poetry lessons were identified for examination in all eight manuals. The poems, presented in a variety of ways in the different manuals, were considered to constitute individual poetry lessons whether they were presented in lessons devoted solely to poetry or were incorporated into larger lessons including prose selections.

Procedures For Analyzing The Poetry Lessons

The analysis of the poetry lessons began with a reading of each manual for the purposes of (1) determining the general organization of the student text and the manual, (2) noting any statements regarding the teaching of poetry, (3) recording statements of objectives for poetry instruction, and (4) identifying the number of poetry lessons contained in the manual. Each manual was read a second time to ensure that no reference to poetry had been overlooked.

Four steps were followed in the analysis of each poetry lesson. First, the poem or poems presented in the lesson were read several times to develop an understanding of both their form and content. Second, the

entire poetry lesson was read at least twice to establish familiarity with the suggested teaching procedures. Third, the suggested procedures were rated on the assessment instrument by checking one of the three possible response options for each statement on the instrument. Fourth, written comments to further describe salient features of the lesson were then added.

After all of the poetry lessons in a given manual were analyzed in this way, the examiner reviewed every lesson and the assessment instrument completed for each lesson to ensure that no errors in rating items had occurred, and that no clereical errors had been made in marking the items on the assessment instrument. In the few instances when questions arose concerning the rating of specific procedures in various lessons, the examiner sought a second opinion from another judge.

Following the final review of the suggested teaching procedures, a table was completed that summarized the total number of times each characteristic on the assessment instrument was rated P+ (Present Enhances), P- (Present Detracts), or A (Absent) in all of the lessons in the manual.

Finally, the summary table and the written comments from the assessment instrument were used as the basis for writing a descriptive analysis and a summary of the suggested teaching procedures. The complete analysis of each manual examined thus included (1) an overview of the poetry lessons, including a listing of stated objectives; (2) the assessment instrument ratings and descriptions of the suggested teaching procedures; (3) a summary table of assessment instrument ratings; and (4) a concluding summary.

Findings

The objectives for poetry instruction and the suggested poetry teaching procedures were analyzed in individual manuals as well as across manuals. Because of space limitations, only the findings across manuals are focused on in this paper.

Objectives For Poetry Instruction

In seven of the eight manuals no major objective for poetry instruction is stated. Instructional objectives are given for every poetry lesson in four manuals, while two identify specific objectives for some, but not all lessons. One manual does not state instructional objectives for any of the poetry lessons presented; one lists objectives in a Scope and Sequence Chart, but not in the body of the manual.

The majority of instructional objectives emphasize learning in the cognitive rather than the affective domain. Typically, objectives are stated in terms of "understanding," "noting," "recognizing," "observing," "realizing," "identifying," "discriminating," and "learning." Terms such as "appreciating" and "enjoying" are seldom found. Among the variety of objectives stated, the ones that appear most often are those designed to teach children to recognize and identify different types of poetry and those designed to teach the recognition of selected characteristics of poetry.

Suggested Poetry Teaching Procedures

Looking across manuals, it becomes strikingly apparent that not one of them suggests poetry teaching procedures that consistently reflect the five criteria for effective poetry instruction developed in this study. Although the presentation of the analyses of individual manuals is not detailed here, the frequency with which manuals tend to incorporate recommended procedures in poetry lessons can be seen in Table 1.

TABLE 1

The Frequency With Which Manuals Tend To
Incorporate Recommended Procedures in Poetry Lessons

Item on Assessment Instrument	Number of Manuals				
	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
1. MEANINGFUL CONTEXT					
a. Introductory discussion	-	3	1	3	1
b. Key words, phrases	-	-	1	4	3
c. Related to poem, story, event	-	-	2	4	2
d. Questions to guide listening	-	-	2	4	2
2. ORAL INTERPRETATION					
a. Teacher reads orally	1	4	-	1	2
b. Guidelines supplied	1	-	1	1	5
c. Repeated oral readings	1	2	-	2	3
d. Students read along or subvocalize	1	2	-	2	3
3. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION					
a. Grouping for discussion	-	-	-	-	8
b. Teacher as facilitator	-	-	-	-	8
4. EXPLORATION OF FEELINGS, THOUGHTS, IDEAS					
a. Students formulate questions	-	-	-	2	6
b. Poem related to experiences	-	-	1	4	3
c. Affective response promoted	-	-	-	4	4
d. Open-ended questions asked	-	-	2	5	1
e. Discussion of content	-	2	-	4	2
f. Poetic techniques related	-	-	3	4	1
5. FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES					
a. Activities suggested	2	1	4	1	-
b. Guidelines provided*	-	1	2	2	2

*There is no rating for one manual in which follow-up activities are designed to be completed independently by students.

Note. Always = 100% P+ ratings, Usually = 70-90% P+ ratings, Sometimes = 40-60% P+ ratings, Seldom = 30%-10% P+ ratings, Never = No P+ ratings.

While a few manuals suggest some procedures recommended by expert opinion and research, most of the manuals fail to employ any recommended procedures.

The tendency across manuals is not to present poetry in a meaningful context. The majority of lessons do not suggest recommended procedures such as introducing poetry with relevant discussion, exploring key words from poems, providing questions to guide listening, or relating poems to other poems, stories, or events. A summary of the assessment instrument ratings for the characteristics of the 106 poetry lessons examined is shown in Table 2.

Some of the suggested readiness activities fail to enhance students' initial experiences with poems as the activities focus attention on form or poetic devices rather than meaning, turn the introduction of key words into intrusive vocabulary instruction, or ask questions that encourage students to listen only for factual information.

Many of the poems are incorporated into lessons or units that contain thematically related prose and poetry, but there are only a few explicit attempts made to promote thought or discussion of how the selections are related or why they appear in the same lesson.

Although five of the eight manuals usually or always suggest initial oral reading of poetry by the teacher, most manuals neglect to provide for repeated oral readings or do not offer students the opportunity to read poetic text silently while it is being read orally by the teacher. Guidelines for oral interpretation are consistently supplied in only one of the eight manuals.

The oral presentation of poetry is often forfeited when poems are integrated into lessons containing prose selections, as they usually become part of a directed reading activity and are read silently.

TABLE 2

Summary of Assessment Instrument Ratings
For Characteristics of the Teaching Procedures of
106 Poetry Lessons in Eight Basal Manuals

Item on Assessment Instrument	Ratings for Each Item		
	P+ Present Enhances	P- Present Detracts	A Absent
1. MEANINGFUL CONTEXT			
a. Introductory discussion	36	15	55
b. Key words, phrases	14	11	81
c. Related to poem, story, event	21	2	83
d. Questions to guide listening	12	7	87
2. ORAL INTERPRETATION			
a. Teacher reads orally	66	2	38
b. Guidelines supplied	32	-	74
c. Repeated oral readings	33	3	71
d. Students read along or subvocalize	33	1	73
3. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION			
a. Grouping for discussion	-	-	106
b. Teacher as facilitator	-	-	106
4. EXPLORATION OF FEELINGS, THOUGHTS, IDEAS			
a. Students formulate questions	2	-	104
b. Poem related to experiences	13	6	89
c. Affective response promoted	9	1	97
d. Open-ended questions asked	16	4	86
e. Discussion of content	27	31	50
f. Poetic techniques are discussed	26	31	49

5. FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES*

a. 34A, 19B, 12C, 9D, 4E, 3F, 3G, 1H, 1J, 1K, 1L**
b. Guidelines provided - Ratings: 25P+ 54A 10 - No Rating

Note: In a few instances, the total number of ratings for a characteristic is greater than the total number of poetry lessons examined because the teaching procedures for that characteristic varied within a lesson.

*Eighty-nine follow-up activities are suggested.

**A = Poetry or Prose Writing, B = Oral Reading, C = Art Activity, D = Language Activity, E = Further Reading, F = Poetry Related Research, G = Dramatics Activity, H = Letter Writing, I = Choral Reading, J = Paraphrasing Poetry, K = Workbook Activity: Comparing Mood in Poems, L = Discussion.

Subvocalization by students when reading poetry to themselves is not suggested at any time.

Active participation of students is not encouraged, nor is grouping for discussion suggested. The role of the teacher is to lead children's thinking by asking specific questions or making comments about various aspects of the poems rather than to facilitate peer-interaction.

Most of the manuals fail to suggest procedures recommended to help make poetry instruction an exploration of feelings, thoughts, and ideas. Students are almost never encouraged to ask their own questions about the poetry they encounter in basals. Typically, silent or oral reading of a poem is followed immediately by a question or questions asked by the teacher. In some instances, choral reading, or the consideration of literary devices or particular images follows the initial presentation of the poems. Even if, on their own, students do formulate questions based on initial responses to the poems, they are not encouraged, nor given the opportunity to ask them.

Children are seldom encouraged to express personal experiences related to the content of the poems. The suggested teaching procedures sometimes include questions that impose an interpretation or seek a one-word answer rather than encouraging children to discuss personal experiences related to their own understanding of the poems.

There is almost no attempt to elicit affective response to poetry. Instead, the emphasis, in the large majority of lessons, is on the comprehension of poetic text and the consideration of poetic techniques.

The suggested teaching procedures seldom employ open-ended questioning strategies. Usually, questions ask for specific answers that require convergent rather than divergent thinking. In several

instances, questions are asked that are open-ended only to a limited extent as they push students to think in a particular direction.

The content of poems is not addressed in about half of the lessons. It sometimes occurs that the poems are completely overlooked in favor of discussing a prose selection presented in the same lesson. At other times, the major emphasis of the suggested teaching procedures is on the consideration of poetic techniques or isolated images or lines from the poems.

Many suggested discussion questions seek only factual information from the poems or fail to go beyond the literal level of comprehension. Rather than using literal information as a basis for elaboration of the poem's meaning, the answers to questions or the paraphrasing of lines and images serve only to end the discussion. In some instances, an interpretation of the poem is to be stated by the teacher rather than arrived at by the students. Sometimes, instead of initiating discussion that could lead to the formulation of some ideas and possible conclusions, the teacher is directed to ask the students to voice statements regarding theme or main idea after only one reading of a poem.

Poetic techniques are considered in about half of the lessons. While some lessons help students see how the mechanics of poetry affect meaning, create a mood, or evoke feelings, the majority of lessons in which poetic techniques are presented fail to discuss them in relation to how they affect meaning. Sometimes, the teacher is directed to simply state what the use of certain stylistic devices achieves in the poems. Frequently, the instructional suggestions are dominated by a concern for teaching children to recognize, identify, and label poetic techniques. It is often the case that in the lessons where poetic techniques are <u>not</u> considered, there is more attention given to the

content of the poems.

While the manuals tend to offer follow-up activities for some or all of the lessons presented, guidelines for structuring the activities as aesthetic experiences are usually provided in only one manual.

The preferred activities are prose or poetry writing, oral reading of poetry, and art activities. Many of the suggested activities are designed to encourage the development of cognitive skills rather than the extension of poetry appreciation. Many of the writing activities are designed to give practice using specific stylistic devices. In the majority of oral reading activities, guidelines are not provided to help students prepare for public performance. Nor are guidelines provided to structure many of the art activities.

Limitations

The decision to examine the treatment of all the poetry lessons at one grade level rather than a sampling of lessons from various grade levels limits the study in two ways. First, since the examination of the treatment of poetry at the sixth-grade level has not been done in the context of the total basal reading series, it was not possible for the examiner to determine whether the suggested teaching procedures at the sixth-grade level are part of a developmental learning sequence. Second, the conclusions drawn from an examination of the treatment of poetry at the sixth-grade level of basal reading series may not be applicable to other grade levels as it is conceivable that the treatment of poetry is different at other levels.

The assessment instrument developed for purposes of this study is based almost entirely on expert opinion rather than research. Without research evidence, it is not possible to determine whether every item on the instrument is appropriate to every poetry lesson. Nor is it

possible to make statements about the desirability of specific items except to say that these are the characteristics of effective poetry instruction recommended by experts in the field. Therefore, the instrument is best viewed as descriptive rather than evaluative. It should be used only to determine the presence or absence of certain characteristics in a poetry lesson. A high percentage of characteristics found to be present does not necessarily indicate that the poetry lesson is a good one. The reverse of this may also be true; a low percentage of characteristics found to be present does not necessarily indicate that the poetry lesson is a poor one. Judgments about the adequacy of the prescribed methodology must ultimately be subjective until further research indicates that the recommendations of experts are supported by empirical data.

Conclusions and Discussion

The objectives for poetry instruction in sixth-grade basal manuals stress a one-dimensional, mechanistic view of poetry instruction. The majority of the stated objectives are intended to teach cognitive rather than affective response to poetry, with an emphasis on the comprehension of form rather than the apprehension of content. The suggested poetry teaching procedures found in teacher manuals of sixth-grade basal readers in general do not reflect the pedagogical procedures recommended by expert opinion and research.

Poetry instruction in sixth-grade basal manuals encourages students to view poetry as an isolated form of literature, lacking relevance to their own lives or previously encountered literature. The suggested teaching procedures make very limited provision for presenting poetry in a meaningful context. The majority of lessons do not suggest any readiness experiences to stimulate interest or prepare students for

reading or listening to poetry. When readiness procedures are indicated, the most favored suggestions are for discussions that relate children's experiences to the content of the poem, set a mood, or build expectations for listening and reading. Other recommended procedures such as introducing key words; relating the poem to other poems, stories, or events; or asking questions to guide listening are rarely provided.

The authors often attempt to provide a context for poetry by placing poetry selections in lessons or units containing thematically related prose or poetry. Although this may establish a context in the mind of the adult reader, it is questionable whether it provides a meaningful context in the minds of sixth-grade students.

The suggested poetry teaching procedures direct teachers, more often than not, to assume responsibility for the oral interpretation of poetry, but seldom encourage teachers to read poems more than one time. The importance of abundant auditory experience in the poetic encounter is not reflected in the procedures as children have only limited opportunities to hear poems read more than one time or to read poetic text while listening to it being read by the teacher. Students are often expected to understand the poems after a single reading; they are being taught to read poetry silently rather than being helped to discover the benefits of repeated listening and reading experiences.

The suggested teaching procedures encourage student dependency on the teacher, thereby building a passive response to poetry. Active participation of students in poetry lessons is not encouraged; grouping for discussion is never suggested. It might be argued that specific suggestions for grouping would be redundant in view of the fact that basal reader instruction traditionally assumes ability grouping. However,

active participation of students in the discussion of poetry does not happen by virtue of the establishment of small groups. These strategies for student interactions, for the sharing and exchange of information and ideas, and for helping children talk about poems are what are so conspicuously lacking in all of the lessons examined.

The procedures do not reflect response-based instruction. Specific questions asked by the teacher dictate what should be the student's experience with a poem. As a result, students are not being taught to think about or realize the validity of their own responses to poetry. Instead of helping students reflect on their own ideas by listening and responding to the ideas of others, the procedures force students to accept what the developers of basal manuals think is important. In addition, teachers are continuously encouraged to look for and get a right response.

Poetry instruction in sixth-grade basal manuals is, for the most part, a superficial examination of poetic text, language, and form rather than an exploration of feelings, thoughts, and ideas. The procedures provide only limited opportunities for students to appreciate the relevance of poetic expression to their own lives or to consider the affective dimension of response to poetry. Rather than encouraging students to consider and express their feelings in relation to what is being expressed in the poems, the procedures emphasize cognitive learning about form and language.

In fact, there is very little actual discussion of what is being expressed by the poet or what is being communicated to the students. The rapid-fire manner of asking questions inhibits, and sometimes precludes, the exchange of ideas; the possibility of more than one meaning of a poem is almost never suggested. The poems are considered in a hurried fashion that seems to seek closure rather than the

contemplation of poetic expression. It is not unusual to find a poem being used as a vehicle for instruction in the mechanics of poetry.

The suggested teaching procedures seldom provide opportunities for students to share the poetic experience in meaningful ways. Follow-up activities are often designed to develop and reinforce cognitive skills rather than to foster student involvement in the poetic mode of expression or to extend aesthetic appreciation of poetry.

Additional Comments

What distinguished the poetry instruction in the manuals examined was its mediocrity. Many of the lessons were extremely poor, but none stood out as extremely good. Many, if not most of them were quite lifeless, lacking the vitality due the content. The suggested teaching procedures severely limited opportunities for students to interact with poetic text and often destroyed any possibility of children experiencing poetry in some meaningful way. So many of the procedures encouraged both the teacher and the students to attend to the wrong things.

The lessons tended to two extremes, sometimes within manuals as well as across manuals. Frequently, the poems were accompanied by very few suggestions for teaching them, or they were accompanied by very specific suggestions that encouraged dismantling them until there was nothing left. The latter type of lesson reduced the instruction to an experience that was neither aesthetic nor poetic.

As the various ways of presenting poems were studied (in individual lessons, in lessons containing both prose and poetry, and, in one case, in poetry units), a tendency was found for poems to be treated more superficially when integrated into lessons presenting a major prose selection than when presented in individual lessons. Although the poem

or poems were often thematically related to the prose, they sometimes lacked specific introductions, and were often read silently as they became part of a directed reading activity. Discussion tended to focus on the prose selection, and sometimes the content of the poems was completely overlooked. In these instances, the poems seemed to be included for ornamental rather than instructive purposes.

The suggested poetry teaching procedures in the manuals examined not only are not good enough, but may actually be harmful to the development of student enjoyment of poetry. The sixth-grade students for whom the instruction is intended are being taught to view poetry as an object to be dealt with quickly or to be analyzed in a narrow, meaningless fashion that divests poetry of all the things that make it special. As such, the manuals are doing a great disservice to youngsters as the development of appreciation of poetry depends on broader and more relevant experiences than are suggested.

Recommendations for Publishers of Basal Reading Series

Publishers are encouraged to reconsider the primary goals of poetry instruction at the elementary level and to design instructional objectives that reflect a concern for helping students respond to poetry as an aesthetic experience. Objectives for poetry instruction in basals need to focus more on the affective domain of response and less on the comprehension of poetic text and the cognitive learning about poetry as a form of literature.

The suggested poetry teaching procedures found in basal manuals need to be revised to incorporate more of the procedures recommended by experts and researchers in the area of teaching and learning poetry at the elementary level. The suggested procedures should provide specific guidelines for helping teachers structure relevant poetry

lessons in which students can become actively and affectively involved in responding to and discussing poems and poetry.

Suggestions for Further Research

Present knowledge of sound poetry teaching procedures is based almost entirely on expert opinion rather than research. Further investigations need to explore various poetry teaching procedures to determine whether the pedagogical procedures recommended by experts can be supported by empirical data. Are recommended procedures always necessary to help children enjoy poetry? Which teaching procedures are most crucial in helping children become independent readers and lovers of poetry?

The conclusions of this study are applicable only to the sixth-grade level of basal reading series. Future research needs to examine the objectives and teaching procedures suggested in manuals for other grade levels of basal readers. Do the objectives and suggested teaching procedures at the sixth-grade level represent a continuation of a developmental learning sequence throughout the basal reading series? If so, is the sequence a systematic, logical one? Is the treatment of poetry consistent across grade levels or does it shift from primary to upper elementary grade levels? Which procedures receive emphasis across grade levels?

An assumption was made in this study that basal reader manuals influence the teaching of poetry. It is important to find out how teachers use the suggestions for poetry instruction found in basal manuals. Do they follow the suggested teaching procedures? Do they modify the procedures, or do they perhaps choose not to teach the poetry lessons? How do the background experiences of teachers influence the way they use the suggested teaching procedures in basal manuals? How

are teachers' personal attitudes toward poetry being affected by the guidance provided them in basal manuals?

Investigations need to be conducted that look at children's responses to poetry lessons in various levels of basal readers. Do they like the poetry they encounter in basals? Why or why not? When are they most actively involved in instruction? Which types of lessons do they prefer and why? Is there a discernible pattern to their likes and dislikes of poetry lessons in basals?

Answers to these questions should add considerably to our knowledge about teaching and learning poetry; it is hoped that along with the findings of this study, they will help effect positive change in poetry education at the elementary level.

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